

# São Paulo Mercy Ministry

## The Missionary Season of Pentecost

When God poured His Holy Spirit upon all peoples, some mocked the disciples and said that they were drunk. This was not the only occasion that people failed to recognize His audible voice. Prior to the Passion, God spoke to Jesus in an audible manner. Some just heard thunder. Some thought an angel spoke. Only a few heard God's voice (John 12:29). These were not special people. They were just people whose hearts were ready to listen to God. The Holy Spirit changed radically how the first disciples understood God and faith. God was no longer a property of a specific group or culture. He was, in a way, liberated to be who He is truly; a gracious and merciful God of all languages and peoples. He became truly impartial in the hearts and minds of the disciples. All languages contained the capability and concepts to express the divine mystery of God's grace. In other words, God revealed that He was and is speaking and working among all peoples. Our missionary task is to discern His presence among them.

I have been a missionary in three different seasons of my life. I started out as a lone ranger missionary. It wasn't because I thought that I did not need anybody. I just allowed my zeal and enthusiasm dominate my actions. I wasn't necessarily foolish. Maybe I was a little impatient. I was only 23 then. I had an idealistic view of missions. I left for the missionary field thinking that it was a lifetime call and I was never going to return to my land of origin. This actually turned out to be true. I remember saying goodbye to my father at the airport. It was the last time I ever lived in the same place as he did.

In my first missionary experience, I went out with the intention to bring the gospel to people who have not heard the gospel message. I went to the Amazon first. It sounds cliché but I thought it would be a good place to start my missionary journey. It was a complete failure, at least from my perspective. However, it did help me realize that I am diehard urban citizen. I only felt truly at home in a concrete jungle. Any city under 4 million habitants was a small town for me. It became obvious that I should retry my missionary efforts in São Paulo. I left for São Paulo from the Amazon as I was turning 25 and started working with the homeless children and teens immediately. I loved it. It was like coming home to a place where I never knew existed. I always felt close to God where a normal human being would want to flee. Not because it was dangerous. It was the unforgiving stench. It would be obscene to try to describe it. We are still not immune to it but we won't trade places for anything. It is the place where God meets us. He meets us in the strangest place. It was here where I met my wife and we became one unit in ministry. People now cannot imagine a time when we weren't together. Things were going great until we had to leave against our will. It was an issue with our visa to stay in Brazil. We moved to the States and worked on returning to missions. We managed to do it but it was a failure. Well, perhaps at this point, it would be appropriate to mention that there is really no such thing as failure in God's economy. It is all part of our personal maturity. A true failure would be giving up completely. We almost did this but something gave us the strength to move forward. Before we could do this, we needed to understand why the failures were pivotal in our understanding of missions.

During our first missionary experience in the streets, the Holy Spirit opened our eyes to see that these children needed to be connected with the church. Our second trip we tried to create this connection according to our own understanding and wisdom and thankfully, it was a disaster. This is our third return to missions to the same place. This time we realized that missionary work is not our task. We don't make things happen. It starts and ends with the Holy Spirit. It started on the day when God poured His Spirit on all peoples. The gifts He bestowed upon His disciples were to help them discern and participate in His work. We don't bring God to these places or peoples. God is already there, about a million steps ahead of us. He calls us to do something simple. He did say that His yoke is easy. He calls us to listen and testify to His Voice of Grace and Mercy that is always actively present wherever people are present.

His voice connects us with each other. The church is defined by those who listen and heed the voice of the Holy Spirit. We took us many years to realize that any effective ministry begins by listening to the Holy Spirit. We listened and listened. Then our eyes were opened to see what God is doing. However, we still can't see the whole picture. It is not necessary. God does not burden us with all the details. He gives us what we can handle. There is injustice and violence and pain and suffering where we work. We don't know the answer to all these problems. However, we can love despite not having the solutions. Then God showed us that love cannot be separated by space and language. He is able to connect those who listen to His voice even if they are thousands of miles apart. We testify to this truth. It is amazing that a boy who can hardly read or write can say complex foreign names like Nancy and Jenny or Kat perfectly when these names are usually difficult in his native tongue. It is because they are no longer strange names. They are people who have become part of their lives. We thought that it was up to us to connect the church with the children. In reality, God was already doing it. Sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers who write to these children were not inspired by us to do so. They are people whom God has prepared for this task. It doesn't mean that those who do not do this aren't listening to His Spirit. It only means that God has another project for them. He is doing something among all peoples. Mission work is learning to listen and discern God's project in our midst



### **A Letter from Daniel**

“Olá Amigos,

Meu nome é Danyel. Tenho 14 anos e vou fazer 15 em Julho. Quero ser o seu amigo e receber as cartas de vocês. Gosto de jogar o vídeo game. Tenho uma irmã gêmea e o nome dela é Danyela. Também tenho um irmão mais velho, Dreyson, que mora na rua comigo.

Eu já viajei para Minas, Goiás, Paraná e o Rio de Janeiro. O lugar que gostei mais era Minas. Porque lá têm um

shopping e um mercado muito grande. Fui para todos esses lugares com meu pai e meu irmão, Dreyson.

Acho que deve ser bom a receber as cartas de vocês. Tio Stephen e Tia Mary vão me ajudar escrever para vocês também. Deus os abençoe.

Seu Amigo,  
Danyel

## Translation:

Hello Friends,

My name is Daniel. I am 14 and will turn 15 in July. I want to be your friend and correspond with you.

I like to play video games. I have a twin sister and her name is Danyela. I also have an older brother, Dreyson, who lives in the streets with me.

I have travelled to Minas Gerais, Goias, Paraná and Rio ( all these are different states in Brazil).

My favorite place is Minas. It has a big shopping mall and an open market. I went to all these places with my father and brother, Dreyson.

I think that it would be great to receive letters from you. Uncle Stephen and Aunty Mary will help me write to you too. God bless.

Your friend,  
Danyel

## The Background Story

I was reading a letter to Ruan when Danyel came by and sat next to us. He asked if he had received any letters. Before I could say anything, he said that perhaps he should write first. He added that he can't expect people to write to him without knowing him. He asked me to help him compose this letter. He is illiterate. This is the same Danyel who suffered an accident a few weeks after writing this letter. He is truly a sweet child. He is 14 but he looks like he is ten and has maintained his childlike purity despite living in the streets for a long time. All the other children and teens treasure this quality in him and they do everything to keep him safe from any spiritual contamination.

One day, Danyel was alone with us and he wanted to color a picture. For some reason, we only had with us one set of color pencils and we shared this humble selection of color pencils among the three of us. Then a group of social workers came and sat close by. They had the same idea as us except that they had a shoe box full of colored pencils. Danyel stopped coloring and went up to them and he said, **"Come on, guys, you have enough color pencils here to give some to Mary and Stephen. These poor people only have one set with them."** The social workers did not know what to say. We laughed and told Danyel that we had pencils at home. I am not sure if he was fully convinced. We will never forget this incident. It reveals the nature and character of this incredible boy.

Some links to blog post about Danyel and his brother, Dreyson.

<http://spmercyministry.com/2017/06/09/judging-others/> - This is about visiting Danyel in the hospital

<http://spmercyministry.com/2017/05/05/within-our-limits/> - This is about Dreyson and his mother

## Some Closing Thoughts

Caio was the one of the first to receive a letter about two years ago. When I read to him, he did not know what to do with it. It appeared as if he lost interest in it. Recently, he asked if I would help him write a letter to someone who was corresponding with the other children. He tried to dictate a letter to me and then he changed his mind and decided to write it himself. He is one of the few who can read and write. It took him two years to get to this point. Some children respond fast and start writing replies and others need some time to figure it out. They are just like regular children and teens. Your letters are always a welcome to them. It never fails to bring a smile to their face when I tell them that they receive a letter. The reply might take a while. Keep them in your prayers especially Luigi who is in custody awaiting his indictment.

## Financial Support for this ministry can be sent to:

Diocese of Central Florida  
1017 E. Robinson St.  
Orlando, FL 32801

You can make the check out to the Diocese but it is important that you write on the memo that it is for São Paulo Mercy Ministry.

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